

# the Remnant

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Each member of the senior staff of FEE has certain assigned chores, but otherwise he is pretty much at liberty to deploy his time and energy according to his own inclinations and experience. One member of the staff is a clergyman with extensive contacts among the ministry of the various denominations. Several years ago he helped launch a clerical fellowship, "nondenominational in scope, scholarly in interest, and country-wide." A recent memorandum sent to the members may be of interest to readers of THE FREEMAN. For further information address The Remnant, 30 South Broadway, Irvington, New York.*

**What is The Remnant?** The Remnant is a fellowship of churchmen who seek better ways of bringing their religious convictions to bear upon the problems of contemporary society. Our institutions and our way of life, we believe, are intimately related to the basic dogmas of Christianity. From this source we derive our convictions as to the meaning of life, the nature of man, the moral order, and the rights and responsibilities of individuals. The American system which has nurtured us was, despite its faults and contradictions, a projection of our religious heritage. The original American equation had a built-in religious content, but that equation ceases to balance as the religious factors are leached out of it. Their rehabilitation is our major concern.

The problem of relating religion and society was prematurely settled in the minds of those who,

in recent generations embraced such slogans as: "Christianity is the religion of which socialism is the practice." Now that socialism has backfired, this mentality declares that religion has no relevance to social problems — except as the churches successfully enter the game of power politics. The Remnant will be of little interest to those satisfied by this "answer." But for those who are still asking questions it seeks to work quietly, wherever there are lines of communication, for a healthier relationship between the inner life of individuals and the structures of public life.

**Who belongs?** Ministers, mostly — those who put a premium on liberty. A man hears about The Remnant and expresses interest. A plate is cut and his name goes on the mailing list, numbering now about 370 names. This list is strictly private, as is the roster of participants at any given function. No one should be exposed to possibly unwanted personal or mail contacts merely because he is one of The Remnant.

Members of the fellowship are not asked to subscribe to any platform or take part in any action program. This is not a public organization, and members are assured that no one is authorized to make pronouncements in their name or on behalf of The Remnant. Many shades of theological opinion are represented, as well as various denominational attachments. Most of the men are parish ministers; some from big important churches, others from small important

churches. There are seminary deans and professors, college presidents, editors of religious journals, and a few men from church organizations. Also, there are several interested laymen.

Members of The Remnant hold a wide variety of economic and political views. Most of them would feel that popular labels are not enlightening, but if the matter were pressed, they would probably admit to feeling less uncomfortable with such labels as "conservative," "libertarian," or "right wing," than with any other. But then they would go on to explain to the labeler that they are not much interested in merely promoting the orthodoxy he presumably conjures up in his own mind by his act of labeling. It's understanding they're after, and to get this they are willing to dig beneath labels. The vocabulary we are forced to use in the discussion of social problems is loaded with charged words and carries echoes of dead controversies. Thus the necessity of patient redefinition and exposition.

**How does it operate?** The Remnant has held several three-day seminars and a number of luncheon meetings. Each has been built around some outstanding scholar or scholars, men whose main contribution is in such fields as political philosophy or economics but whose thinking has a religious dimension. These meetings are by invitation only; they are private, off the record, tentative, and exploratory. No resolutions are passed; no action is taken to com-

mit the group. We meet to work on ourselves. Occasionally, perhaps, we "work over" each other!

Each participant at a meeting receives an inscribed copy of one of the lecturer's books; and, from time to time, books and pamphlets are offered to the mailing list.

The Remnant has no president, no vice-president, no treasurer. It has a volunteer secretary.

This is not the only way to run a railroad, as the saying goes. For those who prefer them there are numerous organizations structured along quite different lines; tightly knit, wired for sound, geared for direct action. These are not disparaged, but it is here urged that men may think and act significantly in other ways.

**How is it supported?** The future is, of course, problematic. We are not endowed. The major costs of past meetings have been met by grants from a Michigan foundation, with an assist from a foundation in Illinois. We would welcome support from other sources as well.

In the initial phase, I drew up a plan for a clerical fellowship to encourage a better understanding of the contemporary social implications of Christianity. Then a proposal was made to hold a conference along these lines in the winter of 1957-58. To get help with the cost of such a conference I turned to several foundations. A grant was made, and the meeting held in Rye, New York, January 6-9, 1958. Subsequent grants have underwritten the costs of later meetings. Future meetings will similarly have to rely on whatever interest and support The Remnant program may generate.

Since The Remnant is organized informally, with neither staff nor bank account, my employer, The

Foundation for Economic Education, has agreed to act as its fiscal agent. In order that contributions may be subject to an audit, the grants have been made to FEE earmarked "The Remnant," and disbursements have been made by Foundation checks. The money is used only to meet the actual expenses of a meeting. No salaries are paid and no one takes junkets around the country on Remnant money. Remnant meetings in the mid- or far-west are scheduled only when I happen to be in the area under other auspices.

**What about the name?** "The Remnant" was a rather hasty choice. It is a little tongue-in-cheek, conveys a tiny note of good-natured belligerency, and recognizes that our convictions have only a minority acceptance. The name has already gained a considerable measure of acceptance, even outside the fellowship.

**Who operates it?** The writer of these words sent out the original memorandum, October 11, 1957, over his own name. Since that time the communications have been anonymous, not to evade responsibility for their contents, but rather to reflect the stance proper to such a fellowship as that described in the above paragraphs.

The Foundation for Economic Education has principal claim on my time. I am the book review editor of our monthly publication, *THE FREEMAN*; besides which I do some writing and some speaking. The Foundation "works within the framework of the spiritual and ethical understanding embodied in the heritage of Western Civilization. Its conviction is that this heritage, in its social aspects, spells out into the philosophy of

limited government and free market economics. Political liberty and economic freedom, in turn, are important in man's quest for material sufficiency and spiritual growth." Incidentally, *THE FREEMAN* solicits original articles or sermons from you along these lines. If the manuscript has potential, editorial counsel is available.

*THE FREEMAN* and other Foundation materials are sent out each month to some forty-five thousand persons in all parts of the globe; more than nine thousand people — including the nationals of thirty or so foreign countries — contribute financially to the support of this work.

My background includes considerable college work in economics and political science, joined with a degree of affinity for the thinkers in the classic liberal tradition. I retained an interest in these subjects during my seminary course and throughout nine years in the parish ministry. Before joining the staff of the Foundation in 1955, I undertook a ministerial conference program over a period of several years.

Long before I knew of the Foundation for Economic Education, its president, Leonard E. Read, had become keenly aware of the ethical and religious dimensions of the problem of human liberty. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why an ordained minister is on the staff of this organization.

The Foundation assumes no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for *The Remnant*. We use my office as our "headquarters," I am permitted to take time off now and then for our meetings, my secretary volunteers her services for the group, and I am on my own when soliciting contributions for our activities.

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